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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-8225

February 5, 1990

The Honorable John H. Sununu  
Office of the President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear John:

The administration may soon be asked to testify before the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources's hearing on S. 1883, the Tobacco Product Education and Health Protection Act of 1990. I would like to take this opportunity to share my views with you on this proposed legislation.

Kentucky is the largest burley tobacco producing state in the country. Over 60,000 family farmers actively participate in growing tobacco. Nearly 160,000 families derive income from tobacco production, and tens of thousands more people earn their living from an area in the marketing and manufacturing process. Tobacco farms in our state are not typical of most farming operations. The average Kentucky tobacco farm is slightly over two acres, not a big money maker, but heavily depended upon.

Tobacco production provides Kentucky's farmers with approximately \$600 million of income. Therefore, the average farmer may make only \$10,000 of gross income with a net income of less than one-third of that amount. As you can see, these are not large farms, only small family operations depending heavily on this income, which in turn keeps many small businesses operating.

I am providing you with this information so you may understand government efforts to reduce smoking effect many people. The tobacco industry is not exclusive to large companies. Hundreds of thousands of people earn their livelihood from this crop; the same people that elected me.

Currently, the federal government does not spend any money on the tobacco program for farmers, yet it spends millions of dollars to discourage smoking. HHS spent \$40.5 million on smoking control programs in FY 1987 and will probably allocate more in the current budget. The Office of the Surgeon General has spent millions of additional dollars to fund reports targeted specifically at smoking requiring thousands of staff hours.

It does not appear to be prudent and responsible to spend another \$185 million as proposed in S. 1883. Of this money, \$50

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million will be used to fund a Center for Tobacco Products. The primary goal of the center will be to expand federal education and information on smoking and tobacco use. As you may know, the Surgeon General has spent the last twenty years providing this information and it appears to have been effective in discouraging smoking. Another \$50 million is planned for advertising to further arouse the public's attention and the remaining \$85 million will be dispursed in grants, doing what in most cases is or has already been done.

Aside from the large sum of money requested to fund this legislation, it is totally unfair for this bill to associate tobacco with illegal drugs, by including tobacco in the curriculum program required in the Drug - Free Schools and Communities Act of 1986. Tobacco continues to be a legal product in the United States.

Making a comparison between nicotine and crack cocaine can not be justified. People have died while actually smoking crack cocaine, people have died in drug territorial wars, innocent people have been murdered by drug intoxicated crazies that lose all control of their actions, and million of dollars of personal property has been lost because addicts must feed an illegal habit. I think that you must agree that there is a clear and definable difference between tobacco and illegal narcotics and any comparison simply diminishes the true severity of the drug problem.

I know that you are aware of the importance of tobacco to my state, but I wanted you to know the detrimental impact this bill could have on Kentucky. Many choose to attack the tobacco industry however, I have chosed to defend the people of this industry. Fighting this bill may not be favorable to the general public, but as an elected official, my Kentucky tobacco farmers expect it. Furthermore, at election time, my actions on S. 1883 will be one of the factors considered by my constituency. Therefore, it would be most beneficial to know the administration's position on this bill. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

MITCH MCCONNELL  
UNITED STATES SENATOR

MM/jh

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